



Eastern Florida STATE COLLEGE

The Great Debate Series

In an effort to enhance student awareness and knowledge of contemporary public policy issues, Eastern Florida State College (EFSC) initiated the “Great Debate” series on its Melbourne campus. Each semester, policy experts and advocates are invited to the college to engage in a Lincoln/Douglass style debate on topics such as the All-American Flag Act, Reforming the Public Defender system, Marijuana Legalization, and the 2016 Election.

For the Fall semester 2015, the topic of Marijuana Legalization in Florida was debated by drug policy experts Jeremy Bailee, an attorney from the law firm of Abbey, Adams, Byelick, and Mueller, and Jodi James, Director of the Florida Cannabis Action Network. In an energetic and lively exchange, both debaters held firm to their positions and presented compelling context and testimony to inform and persuade an auditorium packed with EFSC students, faculty, and staff members.

Attendees experienced the effective use of rhetoric between interlocutors in a formal debate setting. In addition, students were exposed to a high level of civility, an important component of increased civic engagement. John Cruz, an EFSC student, said that “this was one of the most heated arguments I have ever witnessed, yet both debaters treated each other with respect, which was quite refreshing.” In pursuing increased student involvement in public discourse and civic engagement, EFSC is committed to advancing respect and civility within the body politic.

At the conclusion of each Great Debate, students are invited to present questions and comments for the policy experts. Debaters have consistently commented that the student question-and-answer portion is one of the most rewarding aspects of the event. The audience members developed a dialogue with the presenters, continuing to explore issues and challenges associated with the topics. Eastern Florida State College anticipates continued success with the Great Debate series.

Tags: *Great Debate, Civility, Marijuana Legalization, Civic Engagement*

[View it on YouTube](#)

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